

February 21, 2017

Dear Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee:

Our names are Rick and Fay Lenz and we live in Simsbury. We are the parents and legal guardians of Daniel Lenz, our 36 year old youngest of six sons, who is an individual with intellectual and developmental disabilities ("I/DD"). We are testifying on the impact of the Governor's budget on people with I/DD.

First of all, we are grateful that the Governor's proposed budget includes some positive steps to begin to address the residential waiting list and to stabilize community supports for people with I/DD. At the same time, we are very concerned that there is no money at all for new graduates with I/DD in either year of the proposed two year budget. This omission will have devastating and long-standing effects if not corrected in the final budget.

Two years ago, our son Daniel testified at a hearing before the I/DD caucus (see photo below) and shared with the legislators how DDS funding and the supports provided by the ARC of the Farmington Valley ("Favarh") had helped him to achieve his dream of greater independence to pursue his own life. The first step toward that dream occurred when Dan graduated from the Farmington Valley Transition Academy and received funding for Favarh-provided day and employment programs. Through those programs he developed both the self confidence and basic skills to work at a paying job (group supported employment at Davidson & Company in Newington) and to become a contributing member of society. And that growth process continued when Dan was eventually awarded residential funding for a shared apartment in Avon, also supported by Favarh.

We cannot imagine how different Daniel's life would be today if that graduate funding had not been available to support his initial transition into post-high school adult life. He no doubt would have regressed and lost most of the growth he had experienced through Simsbury's excellent special education system. Please don't let that happen to any of the I/DD graduates who will be leaving our schools in the next biennial. They need your support, and we—the citizens of Connecticut—need their visible presence as an active part of our society.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our views and our experience.

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